



Forty Years On Two Wheels

"I don't smoke, drink, gamble, do drugs, or consort with women of easy virtue; I just ride motorcycles."

~Since 2004~

A site about memories, thoughts, photos, and unrepentant opinions about motorcycles and motorcycling after four decades of twisting the throttle.

FRIDAY, MAY 30, 2014

Then Came Bronson



A replica of Jim Bronson's bike.

It's been pointed out to me by friends that I left an important movie off of my list of Motorcycle Movies You Should See. That movie is **Then Came Bronson**.

Then Came Bronson (TV movie)

Then Came Bronson was a TV series from 1969-70. The pilot was a made-for-TV movie by the same title. The story revolved around "Jim Bronson," a newspaper reporter who finds life is offering more questions than answers so he quits his job and sets off from San Francisco on his Harley Sportster to see America and sort things out. The laconic character of Jim Bronson was played by Michael Parks and is based on the real life person of Birney Jarvis. Birney Jarvis was a reporter, a Hells Angel, a blue water sailor, boxer, and general larger than life character. The adventures of Jim Bronson were in keeping with Birney's life. More importantly, Then Came Bronson was probably the first movie or TV series to portray motorcycling in a reasonable light and Bronson's wanderings and philosophical bent motivated lots of young men to see the Harley Sportster or motorcycles in general as a ticket to freedom.



Long about 1970 or so I did visit Oceanside Harley Davidson to buy a Sportster but it didn't go well. I had the money but in those days Harley dealers were not the spit and polish places they are now, eager to drain your wallet and make you part of the Harley "lifestyle." Ugh. In this case, the dealership was in a tin industrial building

ABOUT ME

I'm no one special, I've just been riding a long time now and have accumulated a lot of stories, all of them true, mostly. - Doug Klassen

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and the huge guy behind the counter looked like he opened beer bottles with what was left of his teeth. "Whaddaya want, kid?" he said leaning on the counter. Skinny, 19 year old me replied "I want to buy a Sportster." Now in those days the Sporster was still considered a hot bike, only the new Honda 750/4 pretended to be faster and the Harley people would assure you that it wasn't. Mr. Greasy Hands at the counter turned to someone unseen in the back of the shop and said "Hah! Hey Louie! Da kid thinks he wants to buy a SPORTSTER!" I don't know if I was intimidated or just didn't want to spend money where I wasn't welcome but I left and bought a new Suzuki T500 which in fact was surely a better machine than the old iron head Sportster.



I tried in 2003 to buy a Sportster, perhaps some latent seed from Then Came Bronson was still trying to germinate. I visited Chester's Harley Davidson to buy one of the new Sportsters with the rubber mounted engine. The clean, orderly, slightly ignorant sales guy quoted me full retail plus \$1200 for set-up...and wouldn't budge on any of it, even got rude when I suggested \$1200 to set up a bike like the Sportster was absurd. So I left and bought a new Kawasaki 1600 Classic from Kelly's Kawasaki, surely a much nicer machine than the Sportster. If nothing else I suppose the above stories in a small way illustrate the impression Then Came Bronson made on impressionable teenagers in 1969.

Posted by Unknown at 3:30 PM

5 comments:



Lucky said...
Great post and I love the look of the Bronson bike, I'm going to have to find that movie.



bob skoot said...
Doug:

I used to look forward to viewing, Then Came Bronson every week. I have no idea what was happening but I was just staring at the bike. Same with Ponch, and same with looking at that corvette in Route 66

bob
Riding the Wet Coast
11:18 AM

Billy Gibson said...

I just found this Blog.. Pretty cool. The bike in the pictures is my bike. This was at the 45th reunion of the Movie which was held at Buddy Stubbs Harley Davidson in Phoenix AZ. April 2014.. Buddy was a wonderful host for our reunion, and a really nice person to be involved with for such an event.
I have had similar experiences as the author.. I rode Hondas and Kawasakis for years because of the way I was treated at Harley Dealerships. But the lure of the open road and the desire to see this great country was cemented in my by "Then Came Bronson". My first coast to coast "Bronson Trip" was in 1978 on a 1977 KZ-1000... I'm still doing those trips, but these days on an ElectraGlide..
7:38 AM



IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR

